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Shantee Rosado
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Black Collective Identity Formation Among Afro-
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Author: Shantee Rosado

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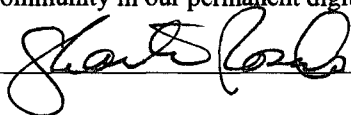
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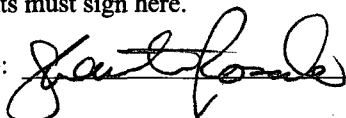
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*El Que no Tiene Dinga, Tiene Mandinga*¹:
**Black Collective Identity Formation among Afro-descendants in
Dominican Republic and Ecuador**

Shantee L. Rosado

Macalester College

¹ Literally translates to “He who does not have Dinga, has Mandinga.” This common Latin American saying refers to Latin Americans’ undeniable African ancestry. The terms Dinga and Mandinga refer to African tribes from which slaves were brought to Latin America.

Abstract

This study examined the historical, political, and societal factors that have led to differing collective identification with the term “black” in Ecuador and Dominican Republic. Ecuador has been home to one of the most organized and supported black social movements in Latin America, regardless of their small Afro-descendant community. Conversely, within Dominican Republic, a largely Afro-descendant nation, national discourses have served to negate African heritage, favor racial whitening, and create the myth of an “Indian” nation. To account for these differing outcomes, this study examined how the implementation of race-based national ideologies known as *mestizaje* in Ecuador and *antihaitianismo* in Dominican Republic has served to shape why both nations identify with the concept of blackness differently. A historical analysis of both countries shows that the different foci of these ideologies, differing outcomes of spatial/racial orders, land/citizenship rights, education, and access to transnational black social movements have all influenced the current discrepancy in identification with a black collective identity in both countries.

“¡Si nos quieren matar, mátenos de una vez por ser negros!” (“If you want to kill us, kill us once and for all for being black!”) –Afro-Ecuadorian man arrested at Parque La Carolina, Quito, Ecuador.

The yells of protest were heard clearly in Quito, Ecuador on April 13, 2008, as twenty-three Afro-Ecuadorian men were forcibly arrested at Parque La Carolina in the city of Quito, Ecuador on charges of “suspicious demeanor.” Camera video shots of black² men being sprawled on the park’s grass with hands restrained and faces pushed against the dirt by heavily uniformed and armed police were dispersed widely to local television news programs and newspapers alike. This mass operation, ordered by the police commissioner Dr. Marcelo Espín and carried out during an afternoon celebration of Afro-Ecuadorian music and dance in the park, was widely criticized and protested by Ecuadorians of all racial backgrounds. A public apology was offered to the group of Afro-Ecuadorians on June 27 of the same year, after Espín’s removal from office (Sanchez June 27, 2008).

A few months after the incident in Quito, Ecuador, another notable incident was witnessed on July 18 in the Latin American island nation of Dominican Republic, when a dark-skinned Dominican man suffering from a mental disorder was picked up by local immigration authorities and unjustly deported to Haiti given the premise that his skin color signaled Haitian ethnicity. The man was shortly after located at a border town by his dismayed mother and returned to his country of origin, yet immigration officials dismissed the incident as a simple misunderstanding. No public apology or protesting has been evident on the island since then (CNN en Español July 18, 2008).

² Racial terms used throughout this paper will purposely reflect local terms used to address race. Hence, dark-skinned Dominicans will not be referred to as “black” given they do not identify themselves as such, and vice versa for Afro-Ecuadorians. I do this to consciously highlight the complexity and reality of race within these two countries. Thus, the term “Dominican” refers to Afro-descendants and non-Afro-descendants alike.

These two incidents, while racist to the average observer, are testament to the complex historical, political, and social forces that inform how race and, more specifically, blackness are regarded in Ecuador and Dominican Republic. We can consider the differing outcomes of these two events—Ecuador’s government offered a public apology to those arrested and Dominican immigration authorities disregarded the deportation as a simple mistake—as demonstrating the overall rights and recognition afforded to Afro-descendants in either nation and their resistance to racist incidents.

What are the underlying historical, political, and social factors that have led to differing views of and identification with blackness among Afro-descendants in Latin America? More specifically, how have race-based ideologies enforced during nation building shaped the formation of black collective identities in the region? To answer these questions, my research examines the former Spanish colonies of Ecuador and Dominican Republic. Ecuador has been home to one of the most organized and supported black social movements in Latin America, regardless of their small Afro-descendant community. Conversely, within Dominican Republic, a largely Afro-descendant nation, national discourses have served to negate African heritage, favor racial whitening, and create the myth of an “Indian” nation. To account for these differing outcomes, I examine the underlying processes by which race-based national ideologies have influenced the (lack of) formation of black collective identities among Afro-descendants in Ecuador and Dominican Republic. Using comparative / historical methods, I build on work in political sociology (Calhoun 1993, Polleta and Jasper 2001), anthropology (Alonso 1994, Rahier 1998), Latin American studies (de la Torre 2006, Hooker 2005, Rahier 2004) and ethnic / racial studies (Dzidzienyo and Oboler 2005, Fox 2006) to examine collective racial identity formation in these two countries. My findings demonstrate that black collective identity in Ecuador and

Dominican Republic is informed by nation building efforts, spatial / racial orders, land and citizenship rights, and transnationalism.

Ecuador and Dominican Republic are ideal cases through which to examine the influence of race-based national ideologies on Afro-descendant identities, given their common colonial past and current diverging views of blackness. Both countries are former Spanish colonies exposed to the *casta* (or caste) system in which skin-color formed the backbone of social and class hierarchies during long eras of Spanish colonialism (Howard 2001, Minority Rights Group 1995). After their early independence from Spain—1822 for both Ecuador and Dominican Republic—both countries implemented “racially democratic” national ideologies that served to exclude blackness from political discourse and perpetuate racist social hierarchies (Sagas 2000, Whitten Jr. 2003). Lastly, irrespective of their large mixed populations and claims of racial democracy, both nations inherently favor whiteness and *blanqueamiento* (whitening) as a way to diminish their African heritage (Howard 2001, Minority Rights Group 1995). Despite these similarities, Ecuador and Dominican Republic have established different racial formations, which have influenced both the meaning of “black” and the prospects for those who are considered “black” within their borders.

One major discrepancy between the two nations is their racial make-up. Afro-descendants form 5% of Ecuador’s population of roughly 13 million inhabitants. Whites form the second minority (5%), followed by a fairly large indigenous population (25%) and a majority of *mestizos*, or mixed individuals of indigenous and European heritage (65%) (Minority Rights Group 1995). In Dominican Republic, a nation with nearly 8 million inhabitants, racial identification is more complex and harder to assess. Reports state 65% of Dominicans are *mulatos*, of mixed African and European ancestry, 15% of the population is white and 15%

black; the remaining 5% stem from other ethnic backgrounds such as Chinese and Lebanese (Minority Rights Group 1995). Hence, both countries have a large number of mixed individuals, with minorities of white and black populations and, solely in Ecuador, a significant indigenous population.

Another notable discrepancy is the nation's former colonizing powers. Although both countries were under Spanish colonial rule for centuries, Ecuador gained independence from European powers, whereas the neighboring country of Haiti colonized Dominican Republic for 22 years after the Spanish rendered their ties to the nation (Sagas 2000). Hence, Dominican Republic celebrates its independence from Haiti rather than from Spain, even though the Spanish Crown colonized their lands for centuries longer. Nevertheless, in Ecuador we witness a strong black collective identity centered on common African ancestry, whereas Dominicans tend to negate African ancestry and classify these traits as pertaining to Haitians (immigrant or non-immigrant) and seldom to darker-skinned Dominicans.

I argue that the different foci of national race-based ideologies, differing outcomes of spatial/racial orders, land/citizenship rights, and (limited) access to transnational black social movements has led to this discrepancy in identification with a black collective identity in Ecuador and Dominican Republic. More specifically, I argue that in Ecuador, the implementation of *mestizaje* (state-endorsed racial mixture between indigenous and white groups), concentration of Afro-descendant groups in rural regions that do not threaten elite power, an academic curriculum that renders blackness invisible, proximity of an indigenous rights movement, and ties to transnational black movements have all influenced the establishment of a strong black collective identity among Afro-descendants. In contrast, in Dominican Republic, the implementation of *antihaitianismo* (state-endorsed rejection of Haitian

culture and groups), instability of Haitian immigrant enclaves, institutionalization of anti-black sentiments through education, lack of transnational ties to black social movements, and lack of land rights have all led to a diminished, if non-existent, black collective identification among Afro-descendants.

Theoretical Background

Collective identity has been referred to as “An individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation...and it is distinct from personal identity.” While a collective identity may be imposed on a group by outside forces, “...it depends on some acceptance by those to whom it is applied” (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 285). Collective identity encompasses a spatial component, and is therefore more likely to develop in areas where there is more of concentration of one group or another (Rahier 1998). Lastly, collective identity is forged in relation to national identity, and can hence be “within” or “outside” of a nation’s identity (Calhoun 1993).

The importance of collective identity for Afro-Latin Americans, according to Polletta and Jasper’s (2001) definition, rests on the needs of blacks to reshape their past and present situations so as to share something in common in the New World; hence, the presence of a partly “imagined” community which is “fluid and relational” (298). These processes, which Fox (2006) refers to as improvisation, “*insinuate* a strategy to overcome, or at least ameliorate, the condition of uprootedness” common to most Afro-Latin Americans, which they use in restructuring their way of thinking and everyday relationships within their surroundings (52). Hence, one might argue that all African-descended groups share a collective identity given their similar pasts with uprootedness and improvisation.

To form this collective identity, however, African-descended groups face national identities that may exclude them. According to Rosa (1996),

The term *mestizo* emerged in Latin America for very much the same reason and purpose as the term Negro emerged in the United States: to historically dislocate and disconnect Africans in the New World from their common past by denying them of their collective history and identity (Rosa 1996:283).

Rosa's (1996) claims point out the racist nature of the term *mestizo* and its implementation as an ideal to which all indigenous and black persons should aspire. This view of the concept of *mestizaje*, while resisting the oppressive policies of elites in Latin America, assumes that all persons with African ancestry shared, and presently share, a common collective identity. Since a cohesive black collective identity was not always present in countries such as Ecuador, one must also address the contextual factors, such as nation-building efforts, that influence and prompt the formation of black collective identities.

Nation Building

Research has explored widely the importance of the nation as an entity that both defines the citizens of a country—thus demarcating the boundaries between us and them—and serves as a divisive tool within countries to determine who is of a nation and who occupies an unjustified space (Smith 1996, Alonso 1994, Calhoun 1993). According to Smith (1996), “virtually all nationalist projects create internal inequality by celebrating some and marginalizing other ethnic (or racial) groups in the nation” (153). Hence, the formation of Latin American nations can be seen as an intricate process of appropriation, negation, and exclusion that produces an “ideal” to which all citizens should adhere or aspire.

Some scholars argue that nationalism is a tool used to homogenize societies (Wade 2001), and that the endorsing of certain symbols and ideas, rather than homogeneity in itself, form the backbone of nationalist policies (Calhoun 1993). Wade (2001) discusses the aims of nationalism as mainly the creation of homogeneity, which is based on racial and ethnic differences of the “other” and used to perpetuate the status of the elite while “embracing” uniformity. This framework suggests that the fundamentals of nation building can be found in marginalizing and racist ideals. Similarly, Calhoun (1993) argues that nationalism is not necessarily the desire for ethnic similarity, but rather “...a claim that certain similarities should count as *the* definition of political community” (229). To achieve these similarities, nationalist projects could emphasize particular cultural practices and aspirations that may not actively exclude some members as “others,” but may require these members forego some connections to histories or cultural traditions to fit within “the definition.”

This view of nationalism as involving “a distinctive new form of group identity or membership” and “belonging to large scale collectivities” (Calhoun 1993) could result in the exclusion of Afro-Latin Americans as an ethnically/racially distinct group that cannot mesh with the “new” identity established by Latin American elites during nation building projects, unless they were willing to reject their African ancestry in favor of the national ideal.

Space and Race

The concept of space, or territory, is extremely important to the creation of black identities in Latin America. According to Davis (1999), “Space, or the ‘setting’ in which people live and act, establishes parameters on action even as it interacts with social forces, structures, and conditions to construct that action” (601). Thus, spatial relations influence the likelihood and nature of collective identification with blackness in Latin America.

Given their characteristic uprootedness, Afro-Latin Americans seldom have a claim to the lands that they, and their predecessors, have occupied for centuries. Hence, the idea of a space in which they “belong” may seem unattainable to many, as they find themselves being displaced by forces of “development” and excluded from governing centers. One pervasive aspect of the conflict concerning Afro-Latin Americans’ position in the region is that of their location relative to centers of power in Latin American countries. As highlighted by Alonso (1994), dominant ethnic groups have been historically positioned at the core of the nation, with subordinate groups occupying spaces at the peripheries of the nation. This positioning prevents the development of black social movements in Latin America and lessens their representation in important governing bodies. Moreover, Davis (1999) developed a four-pronged theory of the power of distance in space within Latin America, stating that distance from the center of power can be referred to in terms of geography, institutions, class, and culture. Thus, when referencing space in relation to power in Latin America, we refer not only to location and geographic distance, but also to racial and class orders, as well as institutional inclusion / exclusion.

According to Immerfall (1998), “Territory means bounded and marked social space. Territoriality refers to human behaviour as it is spatially organized or oriented. It works as a resource control strategy, proscribing specific activities within spatial boundaries.... The territorial approach is about power as well as identity” (7). Territoriality as a resource control strategy is problematized in the Afro-Latin American context given their overall lack of resources and rights to these resources when present. Hence, Afro-Latin Americans are in a constant struggle to both create a space for themselves, both literally and figuratively, and gain power over their resources and identity.

Territoriality also naturally flows from the creation of a national plan; in other words, to become one whole, the space on which nations are created must be secured from outside threat, and privileges must be awarded to those that fit the “ideal.” This notion is an issue for Afro-descendants in the region who neither hold sufficient elite positions due to racist barriers and who do not have indigenous ties to the land, as do Latin American Indians. Fox (2006) frames this problem eloquently when stating, “...the experiences of peoples of African descent in the Americas attests to a tenuous and at the same time tenacious relation to territory in which they work a land not their own, fight for the independence of a nation in which they are not free, and occupy space at the whim of systems disinterested in their well-being” (32). Thus, the formation of black collective identities may be seen as a partly reactive phenomenon in which the allocation of space to others and not themselves, have led Afro-descendants in disadvantaged situations to gather and demand inclusion in the national sphere following nation-building projects.

Overall, theories associated with nation building, spatial/racial relations, and collective identities serve as foreground to my research on race-based ideologies and black collective identity in Dominican Republic and Ecuador. The following section will highlight these cases and, more specifically, the contexts in which Afro-descendants in each country reside, their (lack of) demands for equal rights, and common racial identifiers used to classify and refer to Afro-descendants.

Case Background

Located on the northern Pacific coast of South America, Ecuador has witnessed in the past two decades a relatively strong black social movement. Modeled after recent successful local indigenous social movements, this black social movement has demanded equal rights and a

voice in national politics for the country's Afro-Ecuadorian population. The recent movement has transcended borders in forging alliances between blacks in South America and Central America and has led to the recognition of Afro-Ecuadorians as a distinct community with special needs and claims to land similar to those afforded to indigenous groups. Still today though, blacks in Ecuador continue to suffer discrimination from authorities and less political influence in comparison with indigenous groups (Hooker 2005). Common identifiers used by Afro-descendants in Ecuador are *negro* (black), *Afro-Ecuatoriano*, *moreno* (literally means brown, but is equated with the term black in Ecuador), and *Afrolatinoamericano* (used more often among intellectuals and those more aligned with the transnational Afro-Latin American movement).

Dominican Republic is composed of the eastern two-thirds of the Caribbean island Hispaniola and is deemed by some as the "cradle of blackness" in the Americas, given it was the location of the first Spanish colony in the Americas, the first port for African slaves, and the location of the first slave revolt in 1522 (Howard 2001). Views of blackness in the nation today are shaped extensively by the nation's independence from Haiti, a self-proclaimed African-descended nation, and the contentious border that loosely separated the two nations until the mid-twentieth century. Thus, when addressing "blackness" in Dominican Republic from a local lens, one is referring to Haitian immigrants and descendants rather than dark-skinned Dominicans.

As of today, Dominicans have given little, if any, recognition to and celebration of their African heritage. Rather, Dominicans identify with their European and rather elusive indigenous heritage (seeing as the majority of the indigenous population on the island was exterminated during the colonial era). The presence of a black social movement has never been witnessed on the island, and no specific rights have been demanded among Afro-descendants on the specific

basis of race. Furthermore, the identity politics and possible inequalities that inform daily Dominican life are difficult to uncover, given the pervasive idea that “Los Dominicanos se reconocen como un sólo pueblo” [“Dominicans consider themselves as one people” (CERD Report 2007:2)], an idea which actively serves to undermine the stark class and racial divisions that mark the nation.

Racial identification in Dominican Republic is highly subjective and not delineated neatly as in Ecuador. Some common identifiers include *Indio claro* (light Indian), *Indio quemao* (burnt Indian), *cenizo/a* (ashen), *jabao* (of lighter skin with African features), and *trigueño* (wheat-colored) among many. This range of domestic classifications, however, excludes the identifiers *negro* and *moreno* (both synonymous with the term “black”), which are used exclusively when referring to Haitians and their descendants. Furthermore, and in contrast to the clear-cut view of race in a United States context, notions of one’s race in Dominican Republic are informed by wealth, education, and fame, all of which can serve to “lighten” one’s perceived complexion in a Dominican setting. What follows is an analysis of historical, political, and social events as they have shaped and informed the relationship of Afro-descendants in Ecuador and Dominican Republic with blackness and black collective identity.

Analysis

The Development of Race-based National Ideologies: Mestizaje and Antihaitianismo

Research has characterized nation-building ideologies as exclusionary tools resulting from the classification of some as aligned with the nation and rejection of others who do not fit the national ideal (Smith 1996, Wade 2001, Calhoun, 1993). Ecuador and Dominican Republic are not excluded from this explanation, as we can witness during the post-independence era in

both countries. One must first ask how the ideologies of *mestizaje* and *antihaitianismo* were formed and perpetuated in Ecuador and the Dominican Republic, respectively.

Following its independence from Spain in 1822, Ecuador, along with many other countries in the South American region, saw a need for inculcating a national identity that celebrated the Latin American as separate from its past colonial rulers. Considering the indigenous groups that were there before colonization and the ties to the land the *criollos*, or local whites, wished to claim as well, a nationalist ideology of *mestizaje* was set in place within Ecuador. *Mestizaje*, which literally translates to “mixing,” was used in Ecuador to normalize and celebrate the mixing of Indigenous and European blood, a process that served most importantly to “whiten” or “civilize” indigenous groups and maintain white racial dominance within the country (Johnson 2007).

This concept of a racial democracy, in which racial mixing was declared as the norm, continued to serve as a force to exclude Indians and blacks from the national framework if they were not “physically and culturally moving towards Whiteness” (Johnson 2007). As noted by Halpern and Twine (2000), “The nationalist discourse of *mestizaje* and *blanqueamiento* devalues Indian and black cultures and histories, essentially making blacks and Indians disappear from Ecuadorian nationalist ideology” (22). Further, the exclusion of blacks from the very framework of *mestizaje* (since Afro-Ecuadorians are not perceived as indigenous or white), has been a point of contention for Ecuadorian blacks seeking a place within the country’s national identity. It is from this invisibility that the black social movement in Ecuador was established.

The complexity of racial identity in Dominican Republic has been largely informed by the creation of a national ideology based on the exclusion and repulsion of anything Haitian, known as *antihaitianismo*, within the country. Similar to the formation of *mestizaje* ideologies in

other Latin American countries, the origins of *antihaitianismo* can be traced to racial hierarchies in place during the Spanish Colonial Era. The remnants of a white ruling-class society and Haiti's slave-led revolution and subsequent establishment as a black nation, urged Dominican elites to establish themselves as distinct from their self-proclaimed African neighbors (Sagas 2000). *Antihaitianismo* ideology, a set of "socially produced anti-Haitian prejudices, myths, and stereotypes" (Sagas 2000) was used as a political tool to maintain a narrow set of elites in power and separate the Dominican Republic from neighboring Haiti when it was being scorned by most of Latin America.

Although *antihaitianismo* had some influence on the formation of the Dominican nation after independence (1844), the pinnacle of anti-Haitian state-led projects occurred during Rafael L. Trujillo's regime (1930-1961). Trujillo, who was Afro-descendant and yet who self-identified as European, was notoriously known for his endorsement of whiteness as the national ideal for the Dominican Republic. During the dictator's totalitarian regime, *antihaitianismo* shifted from a general prejudice held towards Haitians to a calculated and widespread politically endorsed project. In 1937, after signing an agreement with Haiti to define the border separating both countries, and after noticing the continued facility and ease with which those along the border interacted and mixed, Trujillo ordered the calculated mass murder of anyone who appeared "Haitian" in the Dominican Republic. More than 30,000 Haitians and Dominicans were massacred in October of that year, after which relations with Haiti have never been completely reconciled (Turtis 2002).

Present day evidence of *antihaitianismo*, while never again reaching the extremism of the Trujillo regime, are evident in the recent mass deportations of Haitian immigrants from the country, continued discrimination in education, housing, and job markets, and prejudices

regarding Haitians as savages, backwards, and a threat to the Dominican nation. Consequently, *antihaitianismo* has perhaps quieted the possibility of a black collective identity or social movement in Dominican Republic by distinctly separating two very similar groups that might have commonly identified as black: Haitian immigrants and dark-skinned Dominicans.

Education, and specifically public education funded by the state, has been a vehicle for the promulgation and promotion of ethnic and national identity in Ecuador and Dominican Republic since the nation-building period and has played an important role in the shaping of views on blackness in these two countries. One process through which ideas concerning blackness have been educationally disseminated is through the use of school textbooks.

A content-analysis of Ecuadorian public high school textbooks found that, in consensus with the predominate effect of *mestizaje* as a national ideology, blackness was made invisible in the country's social science textbooks (Johnson 2007). Johnson (2007) highlights this finding by claiming, "With regard to the history of the Black people of Ecuador and their contributions to society, they are all but absent from the curriculum and from participation in the historical development of the nation" (56). Hence, social science textbooks have served a very literal and practical role in perpetuating *mestizaje* as an ideology that erases blackness and Afro-descendants from the national discourse and history of Ecuador. Johnson (2007) points out the implications of perpetuating *mestizaje* through the exclusion of blacks from formal education curriculum:

The curricular absence of Black and Indigenous people's significance to the historical development of the nation distorts students' understandings. Because there is no treatment of the histories of struggles these groups participated in, racial stereotypes and negative characterizations of Black people have little basis from which to be challenged

and transformed. The hierarchy persists with the absence of a...discourse within schools that challenges the superiority of Whiteness over Blackness (60).

The use of formal education to perpetuate national race-based ideologies has also been evident in Dominican Republic. Wigginton's (2005) content-analysis of 2nd, 3rd, and 5th grade social science textbooks used on the island provide startling information concerning the concept of blackness as viewed from a state perspective. One example of this is the use of caricature-like portrayals of black people in these textbooks including characters with stereotypically large lips, flat and wide noses, large buttocks, dark purple skin, and portrayal in lower-status occupations. Hence, the portrayal of black people in Dominican textbooks may promote views that Dominicans do not have African ancestry by making blackness something to which Dominican students cannot relate. As Wigginton points out, "Can students readily associate themselves with a population that is purple? Certainly not." (209).

Social science textbooks used in Dominican Republic also perpetuate the myth of an "Indian" nation, which as noted above, has been instrumental in erasing blackness and African heritage from the Dominican national identity. For example, under the theme "Somos Dominicanos" ["We are Dominicans"], one exercise included a drawing of a Taino Indian with white and red paint covering his body, and questions such "How are you similar to him?" and "In what ways do your classmates look like the Tainos?" (Wigginton 2005: 205). Such exercises overemphasize the Taino component of Dominican ethnicity while undermining the existence of a significant African heritage. Hence, caricatures that unrealistically portray blacks and exercises that ask students to assess their physical similarities to indigenous people, are tools that instill ideas about blackness as "foreign" and "non-Dominican" as well as perpetuate the myth of an Indian nation devoid of African heritage.

The use of education to shape citizen's views of blackness in Dominican Republic dates back to the Trujillo regime. After the 1937 massacre of Haitians along the border, Trujillo sought to spread his anti-Haitian sentiments through education. During this time, all education was mandated by law to be based on Hispanic and Christian values while history textbooks were systematically filled with political propaganda and portrayals of Haitians as ape-like and Dominicans as resembling Spaniards (Sagas 2000). Along the border, additions to school curriculums required lessons of the Dominican national anthem and symbols, Dominican historic leaders, and emphasis on language preservation (Sagas 2000). These processes worked to institutionalize *antihaitianismo* and ensure its lasting impact on consequent generations of Dominicans.

Through the use of education and other state-endorsed projects, elites in Ecuador and Dominican Republic have significantly impacted views of and identification with the term "black" in their respective spheres. In Dominican Republic, the development of *antihaitianismo* was marked by hostility towards blackness, whereas in Ecuador, *mestizaje* was built in such a fashion that rendered blackness invisible. Hence, the invisible nature of blackness in Ecuador can be seen as an aid to the unchallenged formation of a black collective, while the hostility towards blackness in Dominican Republic can be viewed as having suppressed the development of a black collective identity within the country.

The Spatial Ordering of Race and Class

Afro-descendants are a group for whom issues of space and territory have always posed debates concerning indigeneity and proper "place" within Latin American societies. In Ecuador and Dominican Republic, blacks (when viewed as a socially constructed entity that differs given

the context) have been relegated to second-class citizenship and afforded few chances for mobility within the country. In both cases we see what Alonso (1994) referred to as the positioning of dominant groups at the core of the nation and of subordinate groups along the nation's peripheries.

Rigidly defined spatial relations have been evident in Ecuador, where the majority of the Afro-descendant community lives in either the coastal region of Esmeraldas or rural Chota-Mira Valley. Life in these isolated enclaves is marked by poverty and a lack of resources. For example, in 2000, the average annual income in Esmeraldas was a mere \$600, only one-third of the national average income (Halpern and Twine 2000). This spatial and racial allocation of funds is starkly delineated in Ecuador:

The national development plan sees the cities as epicenters from which civilization flows to the rural and frontier areas, where mainly ignorant, unskilled, indigenous, and black people live.... Thus Ecuadorian society is spatially constituted...in a particular 'cultural topography' within which different ethnic groups traditionally reside in specific places and regions, enjoy different concentrations of economic and political power, and occupy different positions on the national social ladder and in the racial order (Rahier 1998).

How have these spatial relations shaped or influenced the way in which Afro-descendants have established a collective identity around the concept of blackness? The answer comes not only from the concept of personal agency, although relocation to Quito and Guayaquil is common among Afro-Ecuadorians, yet also from the manner in which nations address social movements and special needs within different communities. Decisions by many to move to urban centers from black enclaves have caused resistance among urban white elites who have

historically looked down on Esmeraldas and Chota-Mira as poor and uncivilized areas of the country. Seen as disrupting the established spatial/racial order, blacks in urban areas are met with discriminatory practices by authorities, classification as criminals, and everyday segregation (Rahier 1998).

As outlined by Hooker (2005), organizing of social movements around claims of cultural difference in rural areas has yielded better economic results for Afro-Ecuadorians in enclaves than have anti-racism movements by black urban dwellers. These rural movements have also been more successful in creating a widespread black collective identity among Afro-Ecuadorians than have urban movements. Hence, the spatial order perpetuated by *mestizaje* ideologies in Ecuador has served to both keep Afro-Ecuadorians in disadvantaged settings where they can claim collective rights, while simultaneously fueling the emergence of a black collective identity in the region.

Within the Dominican Republic, blackness is relegated to the foreground not only figuratively, but also literally with the prevalence of Haitian occupied *bateyes*, or sugar-cane working communities, along the peripheries of the country. While these communities are largely Haitian influenced and Afro-Haitian practices and traditions are upheld in these areas, much of the focus of its residents has been on maintaining a decent living on the extremely low wages and low basic resources they are afforded (Fletcher and Miller 2004). These dire conditions, paired with the constant turnover of the Haitian population as mass deportations take place every few years, are perhaps reasons why Haitian immigrants have yet to forge a collective movement to demand equal treatment in the country.

Antihaitianismo, while explicitly regarding Haitians as the antithesis to the Dominican nation, has also served to physically marginalize lower class and dark-skinned Dominicans

within their own country, while silencing their voices by regarding them as part of a national collective. Thus, *antihaitianismo* has served to physically isolate dark-skinned Dominicans and silence their claims to equal treatment by affording them a place within a larger national identity that subjugates them. It is from this dual experience that we see dark-skinned Dominicans differentiating themselves from and claiming superiority over Haitians who look similar to them.

Land Rights and Citizenship

One's racial and ethnic positioning in the social order is extremely important to acquire land in Ecuador and Dominican Republic. Within Ecuador, one of the main demands of local Afro-Ecuadorian social activists is the official renaming and formal establishment of *palenques*—a term historically used to refer to townships formed by freed or runaway slaves in the area (de la Torre 2006). Halpern and Twine (2000) state, “Despite state claims that Black Ecuadorians are simply occupying ‘vacant lands,’ Blacks have begun applying for official land titles and documenting their long-time residence in the two northern cantons” (25). These actions reflect how Afro-descendants in the region have followed the strategies of successful indigenous rights groups in Ecuador who began their trajectory by establishing “ancestral” ties to the land.

In Ecuador, Afro-descendants and indigenous groups have been partially successful in reshaping the concept of citizenship to be more inclusive. In 1998, indigenous protesting led to the constitutional inclusion of collective rights and acknowledgement of Ecuador as a multicultural and multiethnic country (de la Torre 2006). Also in 1998, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Bank, and the Government of Ecuador began funding the first large scale ethno-development project in the Americas, Development Project for Indigenous and Afro-

Ecuadorian Peoples (PRODEPINE) (Walsh 2002). Yet, while these steps of inclusion led to the recognition of underrepresented groups and state funding for these entities, they also weakened indigenous-black alliances that had been forged in the country and changed which goals were deemed worthwhile by Afro-descendants and the state.

Upon changing the constitution, indigenous groups, who were now recognized as coming from distinct nationalities, decided to break off from their participation in the National Council of Planning and Development of Indigenous and Black Peoples (CONPLADEIN) and form the Council for the Development of the Nationalities and Indigenous Peoples of Ecuador (CODENPE). This strategic political move, which allowed indigenous groups to focus on inclusion by way of electing representatives from each of their nationalities, served to further exclude blacks from the governing body and severed important ties between black and indigenous groups. Furthermore, upon funding from PRODEPINE, which totaled \$50 million USD between 1998 and 2004, Afro-descendants and indigenous groups have shifted their goals to fit those of the funding parties, such that they are ensured stable funding from the project. Hence, indigenous and black organizations are now developing projects centered on ethnic recognition and preservation, which have not addressed issues of racism and poverty in their communities. The aforementioned processes have shaped the face of black social movements in Ecuador and more specifically, have led to a devaluation of anti-racism projects and lack of black-indigenous alliances in the country.

In Dominican Republic, citizenship and ethnicity / race are inextricably linked. In 1947, only ten years after the Trujillo-led massacre along the border, the government established a new national identification system. Dominicans were now required to carry with them a *cédula de identidad nacional*, or national identification card (Candelario 2007). The implementation of

this classification system further marginalized Haitians by denying their access to education and other services if they did not present the card. With the system still in place today, even after decades of working and residing in the country, Haitian laborers and their children are denied identification cards. This loophole has served as an institutionalized form of racism that excludes Haitians from jobs outside of agricultural occupations and denies their advancement as a collective. To further demarcate the “blacklessness” of Dominican nationals, under the “race” section of the card, Dominicans are frequently classified as “Indio,” with additions such as *quemao* (burnt), *cenizo* (ashen), and *claro* (light), further highlighting the continuing legacies of *antihaitianismo* on the island (Candelario, 2007).

While Afro-Ecuadorians have been making considerable gains in obtaining land rights and re-defining citizenship, these gains have been restricted to Afro-descendants in rural areas, have negatively impacted black-indigenous alliances, and have ignored racist incidents that are commonplace in the country’s urban centers. *Antihaitianismo* has become institutionalized in Dominican Republic with the implementation of identification cards that limit Haitian’s access to well-paying jobs, education, and personal documents such as birth certificates. These practices have perpetuated the unstable nature of Haitians’ status in the Dominican Republic and have prevented the development of a collective movement for rights among the Haitian population.

(Trans)National Boundaries and the Formation of Afro-descendant Identities

Afro-descendants’ migration within Ecuador has served to both expand the reach of their influence on politics and highlight issues of racism throughout the country. As Rahier (1998) states, “Black immigration in Quito is described as a calamity, a plague that dangerously ‘attacks’ the city and civilization at large” (424). Instances of such internal xenophobia have

marked the lives of urban blacks with discrimination in the job sector where they are hired mainly in low-wage jobs such as "...nannies, cooks, maids, and factory workers (women), or guardians, drivers, gardeners, and construction or factory workers (men)" (Rahier 1998: 425).

While many attempt to classify blacks as "rural peasants" who belong only in isolated enclaves, over 40% of Ecuador's black population now resides in cities outside of Esmeraldas and Chota-Mira (these cities being mainly Quito and Guayaquil). As noted by Whitten (2003),

For indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian people, urban areas and rural areas blend.

Many such people are familiar with one or more of the urban centers of Ecuador, having spent time there in one or another capacity. Most such rural people have relatives and friends in the cities. Social movements usually originate in a rural sector and move toward the governing center (114).

While this process of rural/urban connection has helped in expressing Afro-descendant needs to the government, one problem evoked by this process is how it informs the creation and sustenance of black social movements in the region. One way in which Afro-Ecuadorian needs have been addressed is by inclusion of urban black intellectuals into the governing body, an act that, although empowering on a superficial level, leads to misrepresentation and further isolation of Afro-descendants who organize around anti-racist rather than cultural recognition movements (de la Torre 2006). The result is national support for initiatives that secure rural land rights for blacks and recognize their culture as distinct and legitimate while ignoring their impoverishment and exclusion in urban areas.

An example of this discrepancy between urban and rural black social movements is the current status of the state-endorsed Afro-Ecuadorian organization, Council for Afro-Ecuadorian Development (CODAE). CODAE's main objective is to, "promote State policies for the

development of the Afro-Ecuadorian people, publicize Afro-Ecuadorian rights, values, culture and history and encourage ethnic education” (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination [CERD] Report 2006: 3). Despite their inclusion into the state, CODAE’s success has been limited due to internal conflict resulting from a discrepancy in goals regarding the development of Afro-Ecuadorians as a community. According to Ecuador’s most recent CERD report (2006), “its [CODAE’s] operating mechanisms are still in the formative stage owing to a succession of internal crises caused by a lack of agreement among the Afro-Ecuadorian organizations themselves.” Hence, corporate inclusion of blacks in the state body has perhaps placed in power intellectuals that are not in tune with the actual needs of diverse black populations while providing the national government an easy escape from demands for equality.

Xenophobia against Haitians in Dominican Republic is widespread and common, even though Haitians are commonly contracted along the border to enter the country and work in sugarcane plantations for extremely low wages. As Candelario (2007) explains, the majority of Dominicans recognizes the importance of Haitian migrants in maintaining the country’s economy afloat, yet simultaneously reject their presence and refer to it as a ‘black invasion.’ Upon the decline of the sugar market in the Dominican Republic in the past twenty years, many Haitians have opted to move from rural *bateyes* into urban centers where they commonly find low-wage employment in tourism or informal jobs as local vendors. This shift has increased the visibility of Haitians in the nation and has fueled xenophobic fears that “Haitians are taking over” (Amnesty International 2007).

Furthermore, recent mass deportations of Haitians and dark-skinned Dominicans perceived to be of Haitian descent have been conducted without due process. It has been widely

reported that deportees suffer abuses from Dominican officials in the process of being expelled from the nation (Fletcher and Miller 2004). Given these constant deportations, many Haitians fear coalescing to demand equal rights and prefer to avoid being identified by government officials as Haitian. Further, dark-skinned Dominicans that might have joined Haitians in denouncing these mass deportations have been silenced by the hostility against blackness in the country and their limited inclusion in the national Dominican identity. Hence, the forging of a collective identity centered on gaining equal rights is prevented by the constant fear of being deported and the unstable conditions characteristic of Haitian communities in the country, as well as the inclusion of dark-skinned Dominicans into a national identity that excludes blackness. While both Afro-Ecuadorians and Haitians in the Dominican Republic are “othered” in urban settings and (through isolation) within their own enclaves, the case of Ecuador differs given Afro-descendants’ (limited) inclusion in the nation and historical ties to the land.

Given the recent importance of globalization in shaping life in Latin America and elsewhere, we must acknowledge the importance of transnationalism in shaping the views of and identification with a black collective identity among Afro-descendants in Ecuador and Dominican Republic. In examining Dominican identity in its local and transnational contexts, Candelario (2007) found that when relocating to established Dominican neighborhoods in New York where the influx of islanders is constant, Dominicans continue to use their common racial identifier of *Indio*. The author also found that among those who have been in the United States longer, have obtained a college education, and are more affluent (such as many Dominicans in Washington D.C.) there is a higher likelihood of collectively identifying as black. Regardless of these shifts in identification, Candelario (2007) clarifies that, “There is an important difference between being *aware* of the inconsistencies between one’s racist beliefs about others and one’s

own experiences of racism, and actually *rejecting* racist ideas and practices” (20). Her words clearly mark the current concern of whether *antihaitianismo*’s legacies will continue to perpetuate the separation of Haitians and Dominicans regardless of transnational movements for mutual understanding.

Transnationalism has been a key component in indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian social movements beginning in the 1990s. The fact that coastal regions of Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, and even extending to Central America, share similar Afro-Latin American customs, traditions, and culture, has aided the formation of a multinational black social movement focused on equal land and social rights and inclusion in national politics. The same has not been the case for Haitians and dark-skinned Dominicans on the island, given the exclusionary nature of *antihaitianismo* that separates Haitians and disadvantaged Dominicans as inherently “different.”

The transnational component that has, to an extent, challenged the legacies of *antihaitianismo* is Dominican and Haitian migration to the United States. During the summer of 2008, newspaper articles highlighted the forging of Dominican-Haitian ties to protest the unlawful and abusive mass deportation of Haitians in the country (Tejada, August 5, 2008). These transnational ties perhaps occur given the relatively similar experience Haitians and Dominicans share in large urban centers such as New York—where they are clustered under the term “black,” regardless of ethnicity, thus creating a space where similarities with racism are common to both groups. We must acknowledge though, that while these alliances are not pervasive, they point to more understanding between the two groups and promises for future changes on the island as circular migration continues between the island and the U. S.

Conclusion

Upon historical analysis, we can see that in Ecuador, the implementation of a national ideology that renders Afro-descendants invisible, concentration of Afro-descendant groups in isolated rural regions that do not pose a threat to elite power, educational materials that ignore blackness, proximity of a successful indigenous rights movement, and cultural ties to transnational black movements have all led to the formation of a strong black collective identity among Afro-descendants. Conversely, in Dominican Republic, the implementation of a national ideology that focuses on blackness as an outside threat, the instability of black immigrant enclaves, educational strategies that mark blackness as foreign, the lack of transnational ties to other black social movements and cultures, and issues of land rights have all led to a lack of black collective identification among Afro-descendants. Before closing, I will review the main findings and their importance in light of the current situation regarding black identity in both countries.

In Ecuador, processes of spatial ordering during the implementation of a *mestizaje* national agenda have urged blacks to remain in two disadvantaged enclaves where they are rewarded for staying within their respective spheres outside of powerful metropolises. Meanwhile, those who choose to relocate and increase their prospects for success are faced by harsh institutionalized racism and segregation. Collective black identities hence become more prevalent and strong in enclaves where cultural difference has been rewarded and weakened in urban areas where black social movements are focused around ending racist policies and practices.

In the Dominican Republic, the implementation of *antihaitianismo* ideology has silenced the voice of Haitians who have struggled amid constant deportations and unsanitary living

conditions and dark-skinned Dominicans who are awarded a place in the national sphere as long as they aspire to whiteness, reject ties to anything African or Haitian, and support a system that has worked to continually ignore their needs. The spatial isolation of black communities has unfortunately gone unaddressed given the divisive and normalized nature of *antihaitianismo* in the country that leaves Dominicans and Haitians unable to see beyond invisible national boundaries and forge a common bond. Transnationalism has provided a venue for the unification of Haitians and Dominicans and has allowed for the expansion of black social movements in Ecuador, although internal migration is still met with widespread xenophobia in both countries.

This study adds to existing knowledge on racial formations in Latin America, while questioning existing scholarly views of race in Ecuador and Dominican Republic. Most studies on race in Latin America are singular in focus (i.e., one-country studies), and while they provide in-depth information, they lack a comparative approach to examine issues of race within Latin American nations. By examining differing views of and identification with blackness in Ecuador and Dominican Republic, this study has ventured to address differences between race and collective identity in two hardly-compared areas of the region, South America and the Latin Caribbean. Future studies should delve into the similarities and differences between these two areas of Latin America, as well as between other areas, considering the complexities and diversity inherent in the region. Furthermore, researchers should conduct interpretive, ethnographic studies in order to compare the lived experiences of Afro-descendants throughout Latin America and complement history-based research such as that in the present study.

While both Ecuador and Dominican Republic provide insight to the Afro-Latin American experience, a significant gap in research on race and African heritage in Latin America has left

these populations' struggles largely ignored. Future research should assess the influence of class and income on black collective identity formations. Given the recent transnational black social movements in South and Central America, researchers should address the reasons why these movements have had little influence in the Latin Caribbean. Most importantly, and in light of the present-day prevalence of racist policies and acts on behalf of the state towards Afro-descendants in these two nations, this research lends itself to the reinterpretation of current policies set in place in Latin America concerning immigration, land rights, education, and citizenship as they interact with racial identities.

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